

CLAIMS

We claim:

1. A system for generating revenue using electronic mail, comprising:

5 a host server;

at least one computer network operably connected to the host server;

a first client computer operated by an e-mail user, the first client computer operably
connected to the host server by the at least one computer network;

10 a second client computer operated by an e-mail recipient, the second client computer
operably connected to the host server by the at least one computer network;

a database associated with the host server;

information about the e-mail user retrievably stored in the database;

information about at least one advertiser retrievably stored in the database;

15 information about at least one advertisement from the at least one advertiser retrievably
stored in the database; and

advertisement processing software means associated with the database, the advertisement
processing software means operable to append information about at least one of the
advertisements retrievably stored in the database to an e-mail message.

20 2. The system of claim 1, wherein the at least one computer network comprises the Internet.

3. The system of claim 1, further comprising at least one e-mail message transmitted by the
e-mail user using the first client computer and delivered to the second client computer for
viewing by the e-mail recipient using the second client computer, wherein the at least one e-mail
25 message comprises at least one of the advertisements retrievably stored in the database when
viewed by the e-mail recipient using the second client computer.

4. The system of claim 1, further comprising at least one e-mail message transmitted by the e-mail user using the first client computer and delivered to the second client computer for viewing by the e-mail recipient using the second client computer, wherein the at least one e-mail message comprises advertisement retrieval software means operable to retrieve at least one advertisement from the database when the at least one e-mail message is first viewed by the e-mail recipient using the second client computer.

5. The system of claim 1, further comprising at least one e-mail message transmitted by the e-mail user using the first client computer and delivered to the second client computer for viewing by the e-mail recipient using the second client computer, wherein the advertisement processing software means appends advertisement retrieval software means to the at least one e-mail message before the at least one e-mail message is delivered to the second client computer, and wherein the appended advertisement software retrieval means comprises information about at least one advertisement and is operable at the second client computer to retrieve the at least one advertisement from the database when the at least one e-mail message is first opened by the e-mail recipient using the second client computer.

6. The system of claim 1, wherein the information about the at least one advertisement comprises target characteristics for each such advertisement, and wherein the information about the e-mail user comprises a profile of the e-mail user, the system further comprising:

at least one e-mail message transmitted by the e-mail user using the first client computer and delivered to the second client computer for viewing by the e-mail recipient using the second client computer, wherein the advertisement processing software means appends advertisement retrieval software means to the at least one e-mail message before the at least one e-mail message is delivered to the second client computer, and wherein the appended advertisement software retrieval means comprises information about at the least one advertisement selected from the database by the advertisement processing

software means and is operable at the second client computer to retrieve the at least one selected advertisement from the database when the at least one e-mail message is first opened by the e-mail recipient using the second client computer, and wherein the target characteristics for the at least one selected advertisement retrieved by the advertisement retrieval software means correlate positively to the profile of the e-mail user.

7. The system of claim 1, wherein the information about the at least one advertisement comprises at least one keyword associated with each such advertisement, and wherein the information about the e-mail user comprises a profile of the e-mail user, the system further comprising:

at least one e-mail message transmitted by the e-mail user using the first client computer and delivered to the second client computer for viewing by the e-mail recipient using the second client computer, wherein the advertisement processing software means appends advertisement retrieval software means to the at least one e-mail message before the at least one e-mail message is delivered to the second client computer, and wherein the appended advertisement software retrieval means comprises information about at the least one advertisement selected from the database by the advertisement processing software means and is operable to retrieve the at least one selected advertisement from the database when the at least one e-mail message is first opened by the e-mail recipient using the second client computer, and wherein the at least one keyword associated with the at least one selected advertisement retrieved by the advertisement retrieval software means correlates positively to the profile of the e-mail user.

8. The system of claim 1, further comprising information about at least one charitable organization retrievably stored in the database.

9. The system of claim 1, where the information about the e-mail user comprises the

identity of a charitable organization designated by the e-mail user to receive charitable contributions from operation of the system.

10. The system of claim 9, further comprising at least one e-mail message transmitted by the e-mail user using the first client computer and delivered to the second client computer for viewing by the e-mail recipient using the second client computer, wherein the at least one e-mail message comprises:

the identity of the charitable organization designated by the e-mail user to receive charitable contributions from operation of the system; and

at least one of the advertisements retrievably stored in the database.

11. The system of claim 9, further comprising at least one e-mail message transmitted by the e-mail user using the first client computer and delivered to the second client computer for viewing by the e-mail recipient using the second client computer, wherein the advertisement processing software means appends advertisement retrieval software means to the at least one e-mail message before the at least one e-mail message is delivered to the second client computer, and wherein the appended advertisement software retrieval means comprises information about at least one advertisement and is operable at the second client computer to retrieve the at least one advertisement from the database when the at least one e-mail message is first opened by the e-mail recipient using the second client computer.

12. The system of claim 9, wherein the information about the at least one advertisement comprises target characteristics for each such advertisement, and wherein the information about the e-mail user comprises a profile of the e-mail user, the system further comprising:

at least one e-mail message transmitted by the e-mail user using the first client computer and delivered to the second client computer for viewing by the e-mail recipient using the second client computer, wherein the advertisement processing software means

appends advertisement retrieval software means to the at least one e-mail message before the at least one e-mail message is delivered to the second client computer, and wherein the appended advertisement software retrieval means comprises information about at the least one advertisement selected from the database by the advertisement processing software means and is operable at the second client computer to retrieve the at least one selected advertisement from the database when the at least one e-mail message is first opened by the e-mail recipient using the second client computer, and wherein the target characteristics for the at least one selected advertisement retrieved by the advertisement retrieval software means correlate positively to the profile of the e-mail user.

13. The system of claim 9, wherein the information about the at least one advertisement comprises at least one keyword associated with each such advertisement, and wherein the information about the e-mail user comprises a profile of the e-mail user, the system further comprising:

at least one e-mail message transmitted by the e-mail user using the first client computer and delivered to the second client computer for viewing by the e-mail recipient using the second client computer, wherein the advertisement processing software means appends advertisement retrieval software means to the at least one e-mail message before the at least one e-mail message is delivered to the second client computer, and wherein the appended advertisement software retrieval means comprises information about at the least one advertisement selected from the database by the advertisement processing software means and is operable to retrieve the at least one selected advertisement from the database when the at least one e-mail message is first opened by the e-mail recipient using the second client computer, and wherein the at least one keyword associated with the at least one selected advertisement retrieved by the advertisement retrieval software means correlates positively to the profile of the e-mail user.

14. A method for generating revenue using electronic mail, comprising the steps of:

providing a system according to claim 1;

transmitting an e-mail message from the first client computer to the host server through the at least one computer network, wherein the e-mail message comprises the e-mail address of the e-mail user, the e-mail address of at least one e-mail recipient, a subject, and a body;

appending advertisement retrieval software means to the e-mail message, wherein the advertisement retrieval software means comprises information about at least one of the advertisements retrievably stored in the database;

transmitting the e-mail message from the host server to the second client computer through the at least one computer network; and

displaying the e-mail message on the second client computer, wherein when the e-mail message is first displayed on second client computer the advertisement software retrieval means is operable at the second client computer to retrieve at least one of the advertisements retrievably stored in the database for display with the e-mail message on the second client computer.

15. The method of claim 14, wherein the information about the at least one advertisement stored in the database comprises target characteristics associated with each advertisement, and wherein the information about the e-mail user stored in the database comprises profile information about the e-mail user, and wherein the step of appending advertisement retrieval software means to the e-mail message comprises the steps of:

reading the e-mail user's e-mail address from the e-mail message;

identifying the e-mail user according to the e-mail user's e-mail address;

retrieving profile information about the e-mail user from the database;

comparing the e-mail user's retrieved profile information against the target characteristics associated with the advertisements;

selecting at least one advertisement comprising target characteristics which correlate positively to the e-mail user's profile information; and

appending advertisement retrieval software means to the e-mail message, the advertisement retrieval software means comprising information about the at least one selected advertisement.

16. The method of claim 14, wherein the information about the at least one advertisement stored in the database comprises at least one keyword associated with each advertisement, and wherein the information about the e-mail user stored in the database comprises profile information about the e-mail user, and wherein the step of appending advertisement retrieval software means to the e-mail message comprises the steps of:

reading the e-mail user's e-mail address from the e-mail message;

identifying the e-mail user according to the e-mail user's e-mail address;

parsing the subject and body of the e-mail message to identify keywords which may be present therein;

updating the e-mail user's profile information in the database;

retrieving updated profile information about the e-mail user from the database;

comparing the e-mail user's retrieved profile information against the at least one keyword associated with the advertisements;

selecting an advertisement comprising at least one of the associated keywords which correlates positively to the e-mail user's profile information; and

appending advertisement retrieval software means to the e-mail message, the advertisement retrieval software means comprising information about the at least one selected advertisement.

17. The method of claim 14, further comprising the steps of:

transmitting a return communication from the second client computer to the host server when the e-mail message is displayed on the second client computer; and

accounting for advertising revenue and advertising expense in response to the receipt of the return communication by the host server.

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18. A method for sending e-mail messages appended with advertising, comprising the steps of:

providing a system according to claim 9;

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transmitting an e-mail message from the first client computer to the host server through the at least one computer network, wherein the e-mail message comprises the e-mail address of the e-mail user, the e-mail address of at least one e-mail recipient, a subject, and a body;

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appending advertisement retrieval software means to the e-mail message, wherein the advertisement retrieval software means comprises information about at least one of the advertisements retrievably stored in the database;

transmitting the e-mail message from the host server to the second client computer through the at least one computer network; and

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displaying the e-mail message on the second client computer, wherein when the e-mail message is first displayed on second client computer the advertisement software retrieval means is operable at the second client computer to retrieve at least one of the advertisements retrievably stored in the database for display with the e-mail message on the second client computer.

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19. The method of claim 18, wherein the information about the at least one advertisement stored in the database comprises target characteristics associated with each advertisement, and wherein the information about the e-mail user stored in the database comprises profile information about the e-mail user, and wherein the step of appending advertisement retrieval

software means to the e-mail message comprises the steps of:

reading the e-mail user's e-mail address from the e-mail message;

identifying the e-mail user according to the e-mail user's e-mail address;

retrieving profile information about the e-mail user from the database;

5 comparing the e-mail user's retrieved profile information against the target characteristics associated with the advertisements;

selecting at least one advertisement comprising target characteristics which correlate positively to the e-mail user's profile information; and

10 appending advertisement retrieval software means to the e-mail message, the advertisement retrieval software means comprising information about the at least one selected advertisement.

20. The method of claim 18, wherein the information about the at least one advertisement stored in the database comprises at least one keyword associated with each advertisement, and
15 wherein the information about the e-mail user stored in the database comprises profile information about the e-mail user, and wherein the step of appending advertisement retrieval software means to the e-mail message comprises the steps of:

reading the e-mail user's e-mail address from the e-mail message;

identifying the e-mail user according to the e-mail user's e-mail address;

20 parsing the subject and body of the e-mail message to identify keywords which may be present therein;

updating the e-mail user's profile information in the database;

retrieving updated profile information about the e-mail user from the database;

25 comparing the e-mail user's retrieved profile information against the at least one keyword associated with the advertisements;

selecting an advertisement comprising at least one of the associated keywords which correlates positively to the e-mail user's profile information; and

appending advertisement retrieval software means to the e-mail message, the advertisement retrieval software means comprising information about the at least one selected advertisement.

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